TIME FOR REFLECTION

TRANSCRIPT
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Hi, I'm Pastor Dave Colgan, now retired and former pastor here at Bedford Free Methodist Church. What a privilege to share with you this Lenten season on the theme of reflection.

Reflection is described as taking the time to think about, meditate on, evaluate, and give serious thought to your behaviors, thoughts, attitudes, motivations, and desires. I believe a certain amount of reflection should occur every day.

When I go to bed at night, I try to reflect on the day that has just occurred because it's still fresh in my mind. I review the activities of the day and the conversations, texts, and other interactions I have with people. I think of the verse of the day on my Bible app. In that regard, the victory may be that I actually remember the verse by evening. The scriptures are a tremendously valuable resource for helping us to reflect on life and keep us going in the right direction.

In the Old Testament, Joshua exhorted the people of Israel to keep this book of the law always on your lips. Meditate on it day and night so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Psalm 119 includes a reference to the word or its synonyms in every one of its 176 verses. Many of those verses talk about meditation or thinking seriously about what is written. The Psalmist writes, “Cause me to understand the way of your precepts, that I may meditate on your wonderful deeds. I have more insight than all my teachers, for I meditate on your statutes.”

Writers from a wide variety of backgrounds have all recognized the importance of reflection. Socrates wrote, “The unexamined life is not worth living.” Edmund Burke wrote, “To read without reflecting is like eating without digesting.” Margaret Wheatley states, “Without reflection, we go blindly on our way, creating more unintended consequences and failing to achieve anything useful.” Robert Rosen wrote, “Self-reflection entails asking yourself questions about your values, assessing your strengths and failures, thinking about your perceptions and interactions with others, and imagining where you want to take your life in the future.”

Lent is a wonderful season to spend extra time in reflection. We need to be reminded of God's faithfulness over long periods of time. When I was young, I often wondered, where would life

take me, especially after I yielded to the call to ministry? Who would serve with me as my wife? Where would we end up serving the Lord, and what could we accomplish for the kingdom?

My friends, reflection can be fun. I reflect upon the past 60 years, and my heart begins to rejoice in the marvelous adventure I have experienced with Jesus. God has been so faithful to me and my wife Peggy over these many years. God has led us every step of the way, and we have fantastic memories of churches we have served, wonderful people we have known, lives that have been transformed by the power of God's grace, and a multitude of opportunities to serve the Lord. I can tell story after amazing story of God at work along my journey. Reflecting on some of these events brought renewed joy to me even as I prepared to share with you these thoughts regarding reflection.

But you may ask, has everything been rosy over those years? Of course not. We have experienced disappointment and difficult times as well. There were moments when I experienced failure and fell short of God's expectations and my own personal expectations. Reflecting on those times is a humbling experience. But that is the point.

As we reflect on our sins and shortcomings, we're reminded again during Lent that the gospel is good news. God's forgiveness and grace is available in ample supply. I assure you, I have been the needy recipient of his forgiveness many times in my life. In those times, Jesus has assured me that he loves me and will help me going forward to overcome my weaknesses through his grace each and every day.

Reflecting on our sins may not be fun. But it does not need to be a downer. While it may bring you to your knees, if you seek the grace of Jesus, it can be a means of growth and you can learn how to move forward with more wisdom and resolve. God can use you to bring insight and hope to others that may be going through a difficult time. When we experience God's grace, we become more convinced of his love for us.Remember, Christ died for us even while we were still sinners.

As I indicated earlier, begin your reflection with scripture. In 2 Timothy 2:7, Paul writes, “Reflect on what I am saying for the Lord will give you insight into all this.” Later in 2 Timothy 3:16, he writes, “All Scripture is God breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.” You can't go wrong with God's Word. Learn to reflect upon your life through prayer.

We sometimes think of prayer as one way street. In James we read, “If any one of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God who gives generously to all without finding fault and it will be given to you” (James 1:5). I have had new thoughts and new understanding so many times during prayer.

Reflect on your life with your brothers and sisters in Christ. Share with them how God has blessed you and encourage them to share their experiences with you. We can also reflect with people about the shared experiences of days gone by. These times strengthen our resolve and remind us of God's presence in the past and gives us assurance that He will indeed be with us in the future.

May each of us use this Lenten season to reflect on where we have been, where we are today in our journey, and where we're headed in the future. Although I'm an octogenarian, I still believe the best is yet to come. My body is probably not going to get better. But you see, for the Christian, we do not fear the future, even death, because we have the blessed hope of heaven and eternal life. Our best days are always still ahead of us. Let our prayer during this Lenten season be the words of Psalm 19:14.

> **May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.**

Amen.The Lord bless you.